

# The Mind of India

IN THE PATH OF MAHATMA GANDHI.  
By George Catlin. Macdonald. Price, 15/-.  
THE BHAGAVADGITA. Edited by S. Radhakrishnan. Allen and Unwin. Price, 10.6.

IN the first of these two books Dr. Catlin records his impressions of, and reflections upon, a rapid journey through India. The journey seems to have had some sort of official purpose, but its principal significance for Dr. Catlin himself was that it gave him the opportunity to grapple more closely with some doubts about Gandhi's philosophy of "non-violence" to which he was and is in a general way attracted. The book is not very well written; the author constantly drops into a somewhat puerile identification of himself with Goethe's Faust, symbol of the Western spirit in pilgrimage; but some of the impressions and reflections are interesting.

Much of what he has to say is about Sex, in dealing with which he betrays the soul of a bachelor. Sex, for him, is not an element in a personal relationship, but a Force, and he cannot quite make up his mind whether it is a good

one or a bad one. He is repelled by the popular Hindu worship of the processes of generation; and yet wonders if Gandhi did not perhaps go too far in regarding sexual relations, even within marriage, as essentially evil. The same blindness to the "dimension of the personal" vitiates his broader reflections on Hinduism. In the higher stages of this religion, the individual aims at some sort of absorption of himself into the World-Soul, and in Hindu society a man's individual life is subordinated to his social function. Yet, Dr. Catlin feels, there is too much rather than too little individualism in Hinduism; it is too easy in India for a man to set himself up as a walking God. This circle too seems a vicious one. Whether there is too much or too little individualism in what Dr. Catlin describes—whether it is a case of being lost in one's own self or in that of the Universe, or of Society—what is missing is any emphasis on relations between one self and another. All this, I think, has a bearing on Dr. Catlin's main problem, that of pacifism. What is it that makes war such a ghastly thing? Is it that it is a Force (like Sex, as Dr. Catlin tends to

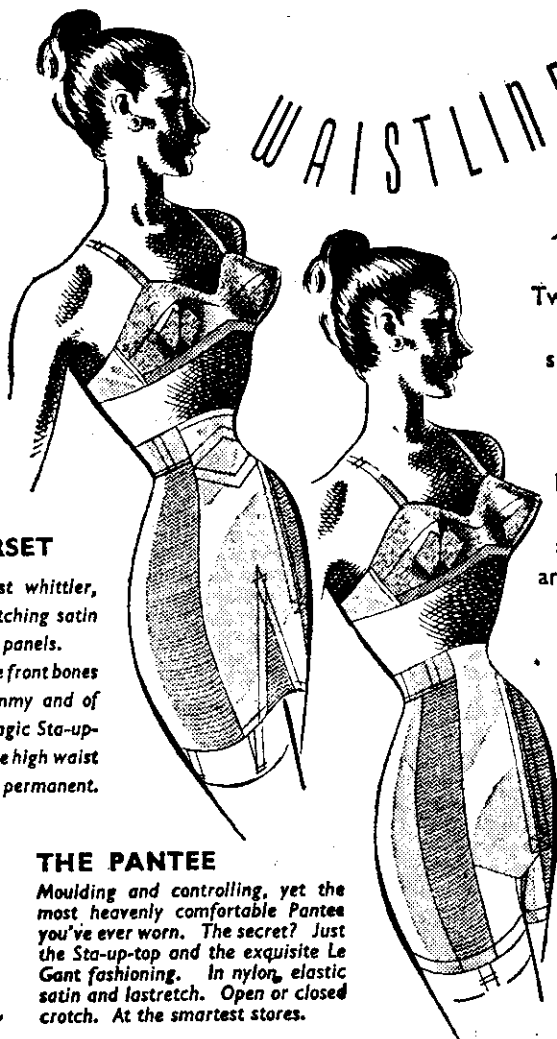


MAHATMA GANDHI  
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conceive it) to which it is beneath the dignity of a free spirit to yield himself? Or is it not rather that it tears up and destroys the material background, and nourishment, of the network of personal attachments in which the best of our life is found? And is it not only as a desperate measure to

preserve the same things that war has any justification? A merely ascetic pacifism is as empty as a soldierly heroism undertaken merely for heroism's sake, or for glory.

Here and there, indeed, Dr. Catlin refreshingly breaks through the Oriental web in which he has allowed himself to be enmeshed. Outstanding among such moments of illumination, are some in which he pencils some questions in the margin, as it were, of the Hindu classic, the *Bhagavadgita*. This old poem is in the form of a dialogue between a warrior prince, Arjuna, who has suddenly conceived scruples about the slaughter in which he is about to engage, and his charioteer, who turns out to be the Godhead in disguise. The incarnate divinity's first reply to Arjuna's hesitation is, "Know thou that that by which all this is pervaded is indestructible. Of this immutable being, no one can bring about the destruction. . . He who thinks that this slays, and he who thinks that this is slain; both of them fail to perceive the truth; this one neither slays nor is slain." The moral is that the warrior should perform the duties of his caste with an even mind. Dr. Catlin is distressed, as he very well might be, both at the sheer inconsequence of this argument, and at the moral indifference which would seem to be the proper conclusion from its premises. "One should



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